

NSC BRIEFING

26 April 1955

MAY DAY FLY-BY

(O/RK FIGURES OKAYED
BY DI/USAF WORKING-LEVEL)

I. Next Sunday is May Day, when we will see the first of the USSR's two annual aerial parades (second is Aviation Day, in August).

A. Because such parades and the rehearsals for them have previously given us some of our best evidence of Soviet air progress, we are keeping a close watch of Moscow skies.

B. Our watch was rewarded three weeks ago, when a number of Type 37's--the USSR's big four-engine jet heavy bomber--were sighted rehearsing.

1. Since then, several more rehearsal flights have been observed, and a total of ten of the jet heavy bombers were seen in the air together on Monday, 25 April.

II. Last year's May Day parade featured a single prototype of this heavy bomber.

A. The sighting of ten Type 37's this year indicates that the Soviet heavy bomber program is substantially more advanced than we had estimated.

B. Our now outmoded estimates held that the USSR would not produce its second jet heavy bomber until the third quarter of 1955.

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1. From this, it was held that the jet heavies would appear in operational units of the Soviet Air Force by the end of 1956.
 2. It was further held that 50 heavies would be in service by mid-1957.
- C. The Air Force, which has the responsibility within the intelligence community for evaluations of this type, is presently revising these estimates.
- D. Meanwhile, O/RR believes that Monday's simultaneous sighting of ten jet heavies means that at least fifteen must now be in existence.
1. From this, O/RR calculates that the Type 37 actually went into production in June '54 (at the Fili factory in the Moscow suburbs) and that ^{20 NEW CYAN VIEW} 30 of them will be built by the end of this month.
 2. O/RR further calculates that peak production with present facilities--15 planes a month--should be reached by Oct '56 and some 230 of the jet heavies should be built by the end that year.
- III. Rehearsals for Sunday's air parade have also shown Western observers two entirely new Soviet planes. These are:
- A. A twin-jet swept-wing plane, somewhat larger than a fighter:

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1. This is probably a light bomber candidate for replacement of the twin-jet straight-wing Il-28's and TU-14's, which are the present backbone of Soviet tactical bombardment.
11. A four-engine (turbo-prop) swept-wing plane, of heavy bomber size and configuration:
 1. The intelligence community is at a loss to explain Soviet construction of a turbo-prop heavy "bomber" when the jet-powered Type 37 is already in production and when a large high-performance cargo plane (suitable for modification as an aerial tanker) would seem an imperative military need.
 2. A further twist to this puzzle is the fact that the Soviets have not exhibited a new multi-engined cargo plane of any kind for the past 8 years (when the Il-18 and TU-70 were flown on May Day '47).

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